

# National Park International Bulletin



Linking protected areas throughout the world

ISSUE No. 4

APRIL 2002

THE waters of the Bering Strait separate the continents of Asia and North America, but they do not divide the people, the resources or the heritage of "Beringia".

It is this simple premise that brought about the first discussions regarding the establishment of an international park that would include lands on both sides of the Bering Strait, in Russia and the United States.

About 50 miles apart today, the continents were once connected by the Bering Land Bridge — not a thin peninsula but broad shoulders of continents pushed together to form a seamless transition from Asia to North America.

The migration and dispersal of plants, wildlife and people across the land bridge, and later across the narrow sea, has left the Chukotka Peninsula in north-east Russia and the Seward Peninsula in north-west Alaska with a common natural and cultural heritage.

That common heritage has been explored more in the past 10 years than ever before, thanks in large part to the National Park Service's Beringian Heritage International Park Programme. The move toward an official relationship between resource managers in the two countries got its start in the 1960s, but there was little action until the mid-1980s when a working group was established to address "Conservation and Management of Natural and Cultural Heritage". Specific themes were developed by the working group in 1987. →



*A river flows by the Great Kobuk sand dunes, in north-west Alaska.*

Picture: D. Mann and P. Heiser

## A CULTURAL BRIDGE OVER THE BERING STRAIT

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### ON OTHER PAGES . . .

AUSTRALIA	
Bushfires postscript	5
AFRICA	
Saving the rhino	7

PAN PARKS	
Linking people and nature	8
NEW ZEALAND	
Pureora Forest Park	10
VIETNAM	
Protecting natural treasures	12
AUSTRIA	
Monitoring visitor flows	14

UK	
Visitor payback	17
NETHERLANDS	
Dwingelderveld National Park	20
NEWS REVIEW	
Including the launch of the International Year of the Mountains	22
SUBSCRIPTION FORM	24